

# WINCHESTER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2021

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## CHAPTER THREE

### VISION, PRINCIPLE, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Recognizing that the main purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to provide a vision for the future of the community, this chapter sets out the updated vision for Winchester based upon the adopted principles of Sustainability. Also included in this chapter are the adopted citywide goals and objectives. More specific objectives and actions are provided for each of the ten geographic Planning Areas in Chapter Eleven.

#### CITY VISION STATEMENT

The City Council adopted this mission statement at its 2008 retreat:

***To provide a safe, vibrant, sustainable community while striving to constantly improve the quality of life for our citizens and economic partners.***

The statement emphasizes a proactive local government that values safety and sustainability while recognizing the need to continually seek partnership opportunities for enhancing the quality of life of the entire community.

As part of the 2021 review and update to the Plan, the Planning Commission noted the oddity of the phrase “***while striving to constantly improve the quality of life for our...economic partners.***” It is not so much the ‘quality of life’ that the City strives to improve for businesses (many of which are not based in Winchester) but rather to constantly improve the local business environment. The Commission suggests that a slightly modified Mission Statement could read:

***To provide a safe, vibrant, sustainable community while striving to constantly improve the quality of life for our citizens and business climate for our economic partners.***

In addition, the City adopted the following Citywide Vision Statement, which helps to guide the Economic Strategic Plan:

***To be a beautiful, vibrant city with a historic downtown, growing economy, and great neighborhoods, with a range of housing options and easy movement.***

#### OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE- SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is the key principle woven through this Plan update. Sustainability is measured in three areas consisting of environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Energy is a fourth area of sustainability that is sometimes identified. In the case of this plan, the environmental concept includes energy. These three aspects of sustainability are

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envisioned to guide decision making by the City, including the formulating of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), the enacting of local public laws, and the deliberation of public and private development proposals.

## **‘COMMUNITY OF CHOICE’ VALUES**

This Plan envisions Winchester as a ‘Community of Choice’ and includes strategic elements to ensure that the vision is realized. In defining a Community of Choice, an important step was to state Winchester’s core values related to quality of life. The following ‘Quality of Life’ values define the ‘Community of Choice’ envisioned by the City Planning Commission and City Council:

### **Quality of Life Values**

- **EDUCATION-** Highly educated citizenry
- **PROSPERITY-** Economic opportunities and the spread of wealth
- **DIVERSITY-** Vibrant, age diverse population that is properly served
- **STEWARDSHIP-** Environmentally sustainable
- **PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS-** Enhanced environmental, natural, recreational & cultural opportunities
- **HERITAGE, CONTEXT-** Preservation of historic, architectural & cultural resources
- **SHELTER-** Neighborhood preservation, affordable & new housing
- **SAFETY-** Safety conscious planning and design
- **EFFICIENCY-** Convenience, mobility
- **ORDER-** Diverse land use, Redevelopment
- **CIVIC INVOLVEMENT-** Engaged public, Social sustainability

## **CITYWIDE GOALS FOR ACHIEVING THE VISION**

From the values above, Winchester’s citywide goals were formulated. The goals consider the extensive research of existing conditions and careful analysis of emerging trends shown in Chapter Two. Goal formulation also considered the perceptions of where the city wants to go to as expressed during the extensive public input process. This includes input in the form of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) Analysis as well as the Preserve/Change exercise. The goals also factor in feedback as expressed in the Citizen Satisfaction Survey which measured satisfaction levels and ratings on the importance of various City services. Details from these outreach efforts are

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provided in Appendix 3 of this Plan. This comprehensive synthesis of inputs is critical to formulating relevant goals, objectives, and alternatives for Winchester.

While some of the eleven Quality of Life values translated directly into goals, several of them were re-characterized under Goal Headings as follows:

<u>Quality of Life Values</u>	<u>Goal Heading</u>
Education	Education
Prosperity	Economic Development
Diversity	Health and Human Services
Stewardship	Environment, Public Utilities
Pursuit of Happiness	Recreation and Culture
Heritage/Context	Design
Shelter	Housing
Safety	Public Safety
Efficiency	Mobility
Order	Land Use
Civic Engagement	Communication

Rather than attempting to prioritize any of the values or goals above the others, the major goal headings, for the twelve selected citywide goals are presented in alphabetical order as follows:

- COMMUNICATION
- DESIGN
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- EDUCATION
- ENVIRONMENT
- HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
- HOUSING
- LAND USE
- MOBILITY
- PARKS & RECREATION
- PUBLIC UTILITIES
- PUBLIC SAFETY

## CITYWIDE OBJECTIVES

For each of the major goal headings above, several citywide objectives were identified as outlined below.

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## **COMMUNICATION**

GOAL: Create a community where people are informed and are comfortable participating in local decision-making.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Provide an extensive array of communication services providing outreach to the community in an effective, timely and coordinated manner.
- 2) Ensure that underrepresented populations are provided with means to participate in local government.
- 3) Strengthen communications with local businesses to ensure that local, state, and federal policies and regulations are understandable and do not unreasonably impact sustainable growth.

## **DESIGN**

GOAL: Promote an architecturally appealing and walkable urban form while also respecting Winchester's significant historic identity, image, and integrity.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Employ New Urbanism Principles in new development and redevelopment including:
  - a. Pedestrian and bicycle-friendly road design
  - b. Interconnectivity of new local streets w/ existing local streets
  - c. Connectivity of road and pedestrian networks
  - d. Preservation of natural areas
  - e. Increased density using bonuses
  - f. Mixed-use neighborhoods, including mixed housing types
  - g. Reduction of front and side yard building setbacks, and
  - h. Reduction of street widths and turning radii at intersections
- 2) Protect significant public and private architectural and historic resources in the City.
- 3) Guide the physical form of development along key tourist's entry corridors leading into the City's core historic district by utilizing a combination of standards and guidelines.
- 4) Ensure that all new development in the City is of a high quality regardless of use.

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- 5) Pursue green building techniques (e.g., LEED certifiable) on major public construction projects and provide incentives for private development to do so as well.
- 6) Encourage the use of Universal Design building techniques to meet the needs of all residents.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**GOAL:** Facilitate proactive and sustainable economic development that maximizes economic partnerships

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Increase sales tax revenue accruing to the City and taxable land uses.
- 2) Increase Median Household Income of City residents and increase income levels of all employable citizens.
- 3) Raise the average income of employees in Winchester.
- 4) Inventory buildings, properties, and areas of the city with underutilized potential.
- 5) Identify and facilitate new infrastructure development to enhance and stimulate commercial development.
- 6) Protect the vitality of Winchester Medical University, Shenandoah University, and other key employers.
- 7) Work with owners and investors interested in developing properties in the city.
- 8) Solicit interest in the community by prospective new businesses.
- 9) Make property owners, developers, and prospective new businesses aware of financing and incentive options available.
- 10) Proactively redevelop property where needed to achieve maximum sustainable potential.
- 11) Preserve the vitality of the downtown area as a major economic center.

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## **EDUCATION**

GOAL: Constantly improve the level of educational attainment for all citizens, regardless of age and socioeconomic background, so that they can realize their full potential.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Ensure support of a rigorous and relevant education for all City public school students demonstrated by readiness for post secondary education or career entry.
- 2) Maintain a world-class public-school division which exceeds all State and Federal benchmarks relating to student achievement.
- 3) Increase the percentage of citizens with a post-high school graduation education and participation in track-based education.
- 4) Promote life-long learning as a means for improving the quality of life for all citizens by developing career opportunities to increase income potential.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

GOAL: Proactively improve environmental sustainability and reduce impact on the natural environment.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Reduce exposure of the public to hazardous environmental conditions.
- 2) Other than downtown, discourage new development within identified floodplain fringe areas, and mitigate the impacts of existing development within mapped floodways.
- 3) Work with the private sector as well as federal and state agencies to remediate brownfield sites, including railroad properties, within the city.
- 4) Promote water quality implementation plans and minimum control measures for stormwater management.
- 5) Work with surrounding jurisdictions as well as federal and state agencies to (a) monitor air and water quality, and (b) address regional environmental issues such as air quality, water quality, and solid waste management.
- 6) Reduce the city's carbon footprint and overall impact on air quality by examining how City business is conducted daily and encouraging residents and businesses to do their part.

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- 7) Explore alternatives to continue viable recycling and reuse while decreasing the waste stream to the landfill.
- 8) Develop a more environmentally sustainable approach to handling urban stormwater runoff resulting in less detrimental impacts on our local streams and on downstream areas.
- 9) Preserve, restore, and create wetlands, wildlife corridors and other habitats.
- 10) Preserve healthy, mature trees, and promote an increase in the city's urban tree canopy.
- 11) Pursue changes to development regulations to encourage the use of environmentally friendly site measures such as pervious paving, 'Green' building techniques, naturally landscaped areas, and low impact development techniques.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

GOAL: Ensure a higher level of social sustainability by providing basic health and human service resources to promote greater economic independence and healthy lives for a diverse and changing population.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Assist persons and families in overcoming poverty, abuse, and neglect.
- 2) Stem the rate of teen pregnancy and substance abuse in Winchester.
- 3) Ensure that the health and human needs of the local population are adequately served.
- 4) Facilitate aging in place among older populations while providing opportunities and places for civic engagement and social life.
- 5) Promote a regional fair-share approach to meeting human service needs, including affordable housing.
- 6) Increase opportunities for childcare for younger populations.

## **HOUSING**

GOAL: Provide opportunities for vibrant, high quality, mixed-income, and higher density housing of a diverse range in suitable living environments to facilitate economic and social sustainability.

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## **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Increase the appreciation rate of City home values.
- 2) Provide opportunities for, and pursue effective action items to produce, new mixed-income and mixed dwelling-type residential use in higher density settings that incorporate the quality design principles of New Urbanism.
- 3) Facilitate the rehabilitation of existing substandard housing units in suitable living environments while maintaining and preserving the existing character of vibrant residential neighborhoods designated in this Plan.
- 4) Actively pursue the acquisition and demolition or redevelopment of economically obsolete residential structures, except those contributing architecturally to the historic district or Corridor Enhancement districts, including but limited to National Avenue.
- 5) Increase homeownership opportunities for prospective first-time home buyers.
- 6) Promote decent affordable housing, particularly to serve targeted populations such as young professionals, college students, and empty nesters.
- 7) Ensure equal opportunity in housing.
- 8) Pursue means of recovering the costs of impacts associated with multi-family rental properties through alternative real estate tax assessments.

## **LAND USE**

**GOAL:** Guide the physical development of the City in a sustainable manner that preserves vibrant, livable neighborhoods and encourages mixed-use development to meet the needs of a changing population.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Facilitate development, zoning changes, and growth of the city in accordance with the City Character Map.
- 2) Incentivize the construction of new mixed-use projects as a viable reuse of obsolete strip commercial and industrial properties.



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- 3) Provide the citizens of the community with a healthy, attractive, and safe physical environment which includes convenient access for all modes of transportation.
- 4) Facilitate the rehabilitation of existing substandard housing units and the construction of new housing units to attract new residents and ensure that Winchester residents are provided with a decent home in a suitable living environment while maintaining and preserving the existing character of vibrant residential areas designated in this plan.
- 5) Provide a range of commercial facilities which incorporates a mix of retail, service, and office facilities, properly served by access through the transportation system, and offer a selection of consumer goods (especially grocery stores offering healthy foods) and viable growth potential.
- 6) Retain and expand upon a diversified, sustainable light industrial base at compatible and appropriate locations which are accessible to transportation facilities, convenient to the workforce, in harmony with other community development, and which attracts higher income workers that contribute to the general betterment of the community.
- 7) Locate public land uses in locations that enhance the livability of the City and facilitate the placement of institutional uses in locations that support the social, spiritual, and health needs of the community.
- 8) ~~Reduce~~ Minimize the conversion of taxable property to non-taxable land uses or ensure that payments in lieu of taxes are provided to cover the expense of city services such as public safety.
- 9) Work with Frederick County to create complementary development strategies and maintain a strong working relationship.

## **MOBILITY**

### **GOAL:**

Create and maintain a safe, efficient, and environmentally sustainable mobility network that is interconnected, multi-modal, and that facilitates walkable urban land use patterns less dependent upon personal vehicle use.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Pursue limited construction of new thoroughfares and widening of existing thoroughfares as shown in the Win-Fred MPO Long Range Transportation Plan.

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- 2) Employ a hierarchy of functional street categories including thoroughfare streets for major traffic movements through and within the community at higher speeds; collector streets to channel major traffic movements into and out of separate areas of the community at moderate speeds; and local streets to provide access to individual properties at lower speeds.
- 3) Encourage the use of alternate modes of mobility including walking, bicycling, and public transportation by all sectors of the population to reduce the dependency upon private automobile use.
- 4) Encourage the growth and sustainability of the urbanized area of the City by providing adequate and convenient parking and a comprehensive system of sidewalks and walking paths.
- 5) Alter conventional street standards especially in mixed use and planned residential developments by encouraging New Urbanistic layouts of interconnected grid streets.
- 6) Employ access management and consider use of roundabouts to provide for traffic calming and improved safety.
- 7) Investigate the needs for multimodal transfer facilities.
- 8) Work closely with Frederick County and Stephens City to extend public transportation between the City and destinations such as Lord Fairfax Community College, DMV, the Employment Commission/Job Training office, and the regional detention facilities, as well as urbanizing areas of the County and Town.
- 9) Promote Telecommuting as an alternative to commuting to work.
- 10) Increase safety on thoroughfare streets and bike and pedestrian trails where they cross railroad tracks and consider grade-separated crossings.
- 11) Expand and improve general aviation, air cargo, and air passenger operations at the Winchester Regional Airport.
- 12) Pursue development of projects and works that are in line with the Vtrans 2040 Master Plan.
- 13) Pursue development of bike share program that serves Winchester through stations at Shenandoah University, Old Town, and the Medical Center.

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## **PARKS & RECREATION**

GOAL: Develop, provide, and maintain quality recreation opportunities at multiple park and open space facilities to meet the growing active and passive recreation and fitness needs of our diverse community.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Develop quality active recreational facilities that meet the growing recreational and fitness needs of all age groups, particularly those helping to address the growing national health concerns related to obesity and points identified as critical needs in the Needs Assessment included in the City Parks & Recreation Master Plan.
- 2) Establish a linked system of passive recreational and natural open spaces that provide safe opportunities for walking, jogging, running, and biking while also preserving environmentally sensitive natural areas.
- 3) Provide quality recreational programs that meet the growing needs of our diverse community through a commitment to dedication, community focus, teamwork, diversity, and integrity.
- 4) Ensure that existing and new residential development has reasonable proximity to neighborhood parks as well as convenient bike and pedestrian access to trails in open space areas.
- 5) Preserve existing parks and pursue opportunities to create new neighborhood and linear parks.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

GOAL: Achieve a community where people feel safe and are comfortable engaging in a full range of community life.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Provide the highest quality of police, emergency preparedness, communications, and fire and rescue services available, with properly trained personnel who are prepared for a wide variety of emergencies, and who serve the community in an effective and coordinated manner.
- 2) Improve the quality of life of all people by preventing crime through enforcement of the law, creation of partnerships through communication and education, and by problem-solving using innovative policing strategies.

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- 3) Continually improve emergency preparedness and hazard mitigation efforts to ensure the restoration of City services and normal enjoyment of life following a natural or manmade disaster.
- 4) Encourage CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) Practices
- 5) Mitigate and improve blighted properties.

## **PUBLIC UTILITIES (Water & Sanitary Sewer)**

**GOAL:** Provide capacity for safe drinking water and wastewater treatment sufficient to serve current and future needs of the City.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Ensure that the environmental quality of the drinking water produced, and wastewater treated is in full accordance with the rigorous standards established by the Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency to assure safety to the consumer and the environment.
- 2) Identify and fund necessary infrastructure improvements that increase water capacity and reduce water system loss on a system wide basis to support current and future needs associated with economic expansion and increased residential density.
- 3) Work with Frederick County to address water capacity and supply issues.